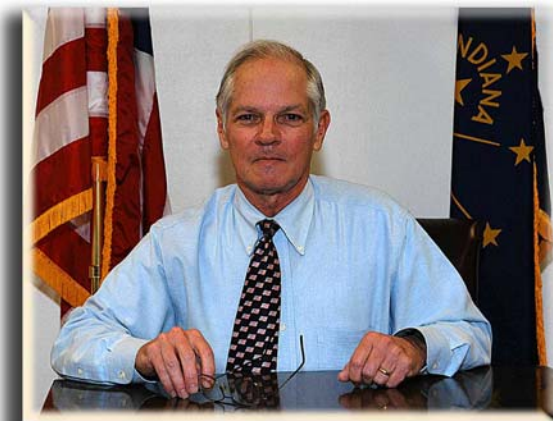


Wednesday, October 29, 2003

## A way to repay Indiana's veterans



Veterans' Home Superintendent Robert Hawkins

**T**he Indiana Veterans' Home, a long-term care facility operated by the Indiana State Department of Health, is located on 250 wooded acres near West Lafayette and doesn't look at all like a nursing home.

The modern brick buildings, including Ernie Pyle Hall (which houses administrative offices and residential units); Dewey Hall (out-patient services, social work, housekeeping, recreation facilities, and the Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic); and the five residential buildings create a horseshoe around the circular main drive. A huge American flag waves boldly in the wind. The chapel sits in the center, fronted by a bell tower, carillon tower, and water fountain. On the surrounding landscaped lawns are pavilions, gazebos, benches, and tables. A pond for fishing or just enjoy-

ing the view nestles behind the horseshoe.

In the mornings, a couple in their 90s can be seen walking hand-in-hand around the horseshoe, and in the afternoons the three-wheelers cruise the outer horseshoe. Patients in wheelchairs are wheeled about by other residents or by staff. Some residents sit outside and simply enjoy the flowers.

"All this is a way to repay the Indiana

eral fund. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs provides about one fourth, and about one fourth comes from the residents' own resources, Hawkins said.

Residents pay according to their ability, the superintendent explained. He said a few pay full price, a few pay nothing, and most fall somewhere in between.

"If they weren't here, many would be in another



Veterans' Home photos by Daniel Axler

Pyle and Dewey Halls

war veterans for their sacrifices and for what they have given the country," says Superintendent Robert Hawkins, H.F.A., M.H.A., as the November 11 Veterans Day remembrance approaches.

The mission of the Indiana Veterans' Home is "to provide Indiana's eligible war-time Veterans, spouses, and surviving spouses with a therapeutic environment that enhances health (whenever possible), while emphasizing optimal quality of life."

Approximately half of the funding for the Veterans' Home comes from the Indiana gen-

facility on Medicaid," he said. "We provide everything – prescription drugs, physician visits, eye care, dental care, therapy, skilled nursing, social services, and extensive support services. And we allow them to keep \$130 a month for their personal needs, \$80 more than Medicaid allows a person to keep."

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Those eligible for residence at the Home are:

- ★ Indiana Veterans who served at least 90 days, with at least one day of war-time service, and received an honorable discharge;
- ★ Widow(ers) of eligible veterans, if married for five years, and not divorced;
- ★ Spouses of veterans now in residence at the Home;
- ★ Residents of Indiana for at least 3 years immediately prior to the date of admission (waiverable to one year, when compelling medical or financial needs exist).



**Of the 345 residents, 88 are non-veterans, and eight are female veterans.**

**Listed is a breakdown of service:**

World War I	0
World War II	149
Korean War	57
Vietnam War	49
Desert Storm	2
Widows/spouses	88
Purple Heart	10
POW's	2



# Water fluoridation saves millions in dental costs

**S**omething that costs just about 50 cents per person per year saves millions and millions of dollars in dental costs, says Dan Cain, director of water fluoridation at the Indiana State Department of Health. The [water fluoridation program](#) is a part of ISDH Oral Health.

According to the American Dental Association, America's dental health bill in 1997 was \$50.6 billion, and fluoridation is the most cost-effective method for the prevention of tooth decay, the most common and costly oral health problem in the nation. Cain says that Indiana's decay rate has dropped 75 percent in the past 50 years, mainly because of fluoridation.

Fluoride is an element that prevents tooth decay and occurs naturally in bedrock in the aquifers. Cain says that if a community's natural water supply does not have fluoride at a level to help prevent tooth decay, the natural fluoride concentration can be adjusted. This is called water fluoridation.

The U.S. Public Health Service has established the optimum concentration for fluoride in the water to be in the range of 0.7 to 1.2 parts per million.

Cain says that 258 Indiana water systems and 44 school water systems have the equip-

ment needed to adjust their fluoride to optimal levels.

"Ninety-six percent of Indiana residents on communal and school water systems are drinking fluoridated water," Cain said.

This includes 90 water systems with naturally optimal fluoride. The total population drinking fluoridated water in Indiana is 4.2 million, he said.

"The three largest non-fluoridating water systems in Indiana are at Linton in Greene County (serving 14,921), Tri-Township in Dearborn County (serving 6,600), and Bicknell in Knox County (serving 4,590),"



Photo by Daniel Axler  
The colorimeter is used to test fluoride levels.

Cain says.

**H**e said the latest communities to fluoridate were Connersville and Seelyville in 2001; Rockville is scheduled for fluoridation in 2004 when their water plant is refurbished.

Cain says there are 72 fluoride-deficient water systems serving populations below 3,600.

Indiana has no mandatory fluoride law, he said. If a community decides to fluoridate, the fluoride must be added according to Indiana Department of Environmental Management drinking water branch regulations. Locally elected community councils

or boards determine whether or not to fluoridate the water, usually after a presentation by Oral Health staff, Cain said.

ISDH's role in water fluoridation is one of providing technical support, according to Cain.

"We are service oriented. If the water departments have a problem with maintaining fluoride levels, our field consultants can troubleshoot the problem and show the water personnel how to fix it. Our staff makes repairs and performs routine maintenance at fluoridated schools," Cain said.

Field consultants are Jim Powers, central Indiana; Fred Finney, southern Indiana; and Pat Sovinski, northern Indiana.

**W**ater departments that fluoridate submit weekly water samples to the ISDH Environmental Lab. The results are reported to the Oral Health division, and surveillance visits are scheduled based on these reports. Cain says compliance levels routinely are above 95 percent.

This statistic recently earned Indiana its third State Fluoridation Quality Award from the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors at the 2003 National Oral Health Conference. The award goes to the states that have the highest percentage of water systems maintaining optimal fluoride levels during the year. In addition, eight Indiana water departments – Batesville, Bedford, Columbus, Kokomo, Lyons, Marion, Michigan City, and Valparaiso – earned a Community Water Fluoridation Award for 50 years of fluoridation.

## Halloween Safety Tips

Trick or Treat. But be safe. Here are some safety tips from the Indiana State Department of Health, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Warn children not to eat treats before an adult has carefully examined them for evidence of tampering.

When purchasing a costume, masks, beards, and wigs, look for the label Flame Resistant.

Children should go only to homes where the residents are known and have outside lights on as a sign of welcome.

Children should not enter homes or apartments unless they are accompanied by an adult.

People expecting trick-or-treaters should remove anything that could be an obstacle from lawns, steps, and porches.

Young children should always be accompanied by an adult or an older, responsible child when walking.

Caution children against running out from between parked cars.

Purchase or make costumes that are light and bright enough to be clearly visible to motorists.

Do not use decorative contact lenses unless you have seen an eye care professional and have obtained proper fitting and instructions for using the product. According to the FDA, risks associated with the use of decorative contact lenses include conjunctivitis (an infection of the eye); corneal edema (swelling); allergic reaction and corneal abrasion due to poor lens fit; and reduction in visual acuity (sight), contrast sensitivity and other visual functions, resulting in interference with driving and other activities.

For more Halloween safety tips, go to the ISDH Web site at [www.statehealth.IN.gov](http://www.statehealth.IN.gov).

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# HOME: Full range of therapies offered

(continued from page 1)

There are 345 residents at the Home and about 430 staff. The Home provides comprehensive (skilled-nursing) long-term health that includes an Alzheimer's unit, residential (assisted) care, and independent living/self-care services. The Home is licensed for 455 beds.

"It's imperative that we continue to provide medical care, including long-term care, for all the veterans of Indiana that need it," Hawkins said.

Nick Vawter, a Vietnam vet with a Bronze Star, has been a resident at the Veterans' Home for two years. He is the chairman of the Residents' Assembly, a forum to air grievances, and also works in the Home's gift shop selling pop, candy, sweatshirts, and other items.

Vawter served two tours in Vietnam. During his first tour, from July 1966 to July 1967, he was a platoon leader with the First Infantry Division. He remembers his six combat missions and the six-hour battle in April of '67.

"We were fighting foxhole to foxhole," he says. "The entire battalion was in a forward defense position, and we were overrun by the North Vietnamese. When it was all over, we had 37 people killed and 75 wounded. There were 600 enemy dead."

He added, "I never slept much that first year ... only light trances. And for a couple of years after I was really a light sleeper."

Vawter also remembers the day he was nearly hit by a sniper's bullet.

"The bullet went about six inches from my head and hit a four-inch diameter tree and cut the tree in half. We killed the sniper. I've donated that sniper rifle to the Home's library museum," Vawter said.



Nick Vawter

The Veterans' Home provides physical, occupational, speech, hearing, and respiratory therapy, Superintendent Hawkins said. There are two full-time physicians and a pharmacy with clinical pharmacists on staff.

Theresa Smith, C.C.C.A. is the director of Allied Health Services and oversees the therapy programs. "It is unusual for a long-term care facility to have on-site audiology," she said. "We test hearing aids, provide batteries, and do hearing testing."

Smith has been at the Veterans' Home for 21 years.

"We're here to provide the services for any of the veterans," she explained. "Most long-term care facilities worry about reimbursement or will provide certain therapeutic services for only a limited period of time until the entitlement runs out. We provide the services for as long as the residents need

them."

Social activities play a huge part at the Home, said Ron Martin, community services director.

"Bingo is really popular," he said. "They'll start lining up at noon for one o'clock bingo."

The crafts room is well used, he said. Puzzles ready for mounting, a quilting form, paintings with State Fair award ribbons, figurines waiting to be painted, needlework, Christmas ornaments, Halloween decorations, and handmade dolls sitting on shelves can be found in the crafts room, along with a couple



Chris Morton, O.T.R. checks Louise Overmiller's range of motion during a physical therapy session. Overmiller's husband was a World War II Navy veteran.

of live "crafty cats" lounging on the furniture.

There are also concerts, dances, movies, cookouts, picnics, and other activities on the grounds. The residents and staff are planning their costumes for the upcoming Halloween dance. Additionally, organizations like the Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Elks, and AMVETS not only provide monetary and equipment donations, but also sponsor dinners and activities for the Veterans' Home residents at their posts or lodges.

Mary Ruth Marvin sat in her wheelchair in the lobby of Mitchell and reminisced. She said she was a private first class (PFC) during



Mary Ruth Marvin

World War II. She was in the signal corps in Egypt. Her first assignment was as a telephone operator at Camp Huckstep, a rest and relaxation post for the troops from the Omaha Beach campaign who were sent there for light duty.

"I got up to sergeant," she explained, "but they took me down because I was playing craps with the other girls, and I didn't know the officers' quarters were right below us. Well, they came up, and all the girls scattered but me. The officers told me to get up, and I told them I couldn't. After a while they left."

She confided, "I couldn't get up because I was sitting on the money."



Residents of the Indiana Veterans' Home take a spin on their three-wheelers.

Veterans' Home Photos by Daniel Axler



State Health Director Greg Wilson, M.D. presents awards

## STAR Award winners announced



Jerry Burkman, R.N., HIV/STD

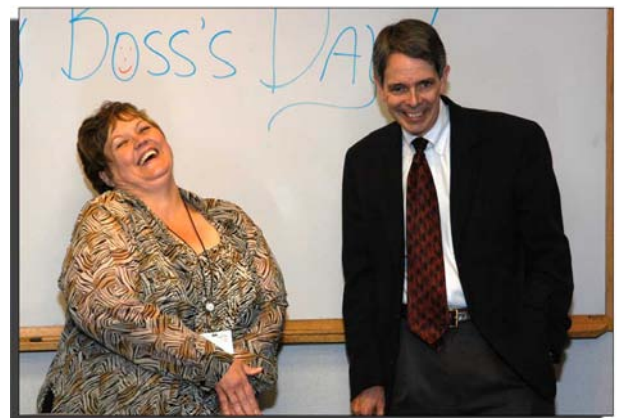


Al Ford, ITS

Photos by Daniel Axler



JoeAnn Gupton, Office of Minority Health



Vickie Wiley, Finance

**F**our Indiana State Department of Health staff were recognized recently by their peers as winners of the Fall 2003 STAR Awards. The STAR Awards recognize outstanding employees for Service, Teamwork, Attitude, and Respect.

State Health Commissioner Greg Wilson, M.D. presented the awards on October 16. Nominations for the awards were made by full-time ISDH staff.

**Jerry Burkman**, R.N., HIV/STD, was named co-winner in the supervisor/manager/executive staff category. Burkman was recognized for her program knowledge, her respect for staff opinion, and her compassion, patience, flexibility, accommodation, and understanding of staff and co-workers.

Nominated by seven co-workers, Burkman was commended for her dedication to the HIV/AIDS program, her understanding of people, and her ability to challenge her staff and encourage personal growth.

**Al Ford**, ITS, was also named co-winner in the supervisor/manager/executive staff category. He was cited for putting a great deal of effort into learning the personalities

of the individuals of his team as a new manager.

He addressed each member's issue one-on-one, assessed the type of working environment in which each member would be comfortable, determined the type of organization needed to meet the work load, and then established a work environment to meet those needs, his nominators said.

**JoeAnn Gupton**, Office of Minority Health, is the winner in the professional, administrative, and technological staff category. She is said to bring sunshine to the office and was praised for her compassion and caring.

Gupton was applauded for her "beautiful" attitude, being fair and nonjudgmental, and for having only good things to say about everyone. She was recognized for going "beyond the call of duty in all areas," including the Black and Minority Health Fair, "Too Sweet" diabetes conference, and the Shower Your Baby With Love, Baby Shower.

**Vickie Wiley**, Finance, received the award for the Support (COMOT) and Labor, Trades and Crafts category.

She was commended for taking on the

Finance file room and winning. The nomination noted this was not an easy task because audits and other situations necessitated that more documentation than usual be kept instead of sending them to storage, and that paper quickly gets out of hand.

Wiley was applauded for taking on additional duties outside her normal routine and assisting the pre-audit section when their work flow required additional assistance.

**J**oe Shierling, chair of the Employee Recognition Committee, congratulated the STAR Winners and added that the committee also would like to recognize all those nominated. He said the committee felt it was an honor to be nominated.

Others nominated were Matt Doades, ITS; Carol Elmer, Long-Term Care; Veronica Hibbler, Office of Legal Affairs; Darlene Jones, Long-Term Care; Murray Lawry, Operational Services; Roger Palamara, Finance; Pam Pontones, Epidemiology Resource Center; Lana Richmond, Acute Care; Kimberly Rief, Maternal and Child Health; Ron Sanderson, Microbiology Labs; and Patricia Watkins, Acute Care.